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purposes due to substitution to have been in the neighborhood of 13 per cent. between 1907 and 1914 alone." Even roofing shingles of wood are taking the downward trend compared with other materials and the tendency is to make the wooden trim of interiors give way to metal and concrete. This change must favor not merely greater safety from fire but favor health, because wood absorbs and holds dampness and microbes.

We should be still more impressed if this exchange of wooden for concrete and hollow-tile homes were accompanied by a better understanding of the capabilities of these materials for beautiful and original work; but architects and home-designers are few and far between who can get it out of their heads that concrete construction is the same as wooden. Of course this is not so. Yet we see costly villas put up which are literal translations of wooden architecture, just productions for wood uttered in concrete. Such architects and designers lose great advantages because they have failed to study the points wherein the concrete house can be made artistically as well as practically superior to the frame building. Concrete can be handled with the utmost ease; at little cost it can follow the most imaginative design. Costly brick-work for chimneys is practically suppressed. Space is given on exterior walls for sculptures in low relief or for mosaics in color; on inner walls for mural paintings, architectural motifs; on floors for tessellated pavements.

We are very slow to take advantage of all these points in practically non-destructible buildings on which decoration can be lavished with a certainty of permanence, perhaps because we cling unconsciously to wood with all its weaknesses and perishability, its liability to leak, its inability to keep out the heat and the cold. We have the wooden house in our ancestry. Half a century has gone by since the advent of "armored concrete" yet only now is a preponderance of safe and sane materials over wood to be recorded and, unable to adjust ourselves to the new stuff, we are timid under the spell of tradition—lame on the art side. The practical superiority of the material has finally forced concrete upon us, but where are the signs that we realize what a chance this material gives for greater beauty in house and home?

SOME RECENT BOOKS

Ancient Times. A History of the Early World. By James Henry Breasted, Ph.D. The attempt to comprise what is known of the past history of mankind in Europe from the first appearance of human beings down to the ruin of the Eastern and Western Roman Empires within a handy little octavo of some 700 pages is an undertaking that requires a very uncommon knowledge of the latest discoveries in Asia, Africa and Europe, as well as the facts and fictions handed down by the historians of Greece and Rome. Materials are so abundant that such a plan might appear impossible except by the use of dates, lists and barren statements too dry to contemplate. The problem was complicated by the necessity of producing a text-book that would meet the requirements of schools, each chapter being followed by a series of "questions"

intended to supply a review of the main points of the chapter. This was the task: condensation and thoroughness without loss to the reader and student of freshness of interest.

Fortunately in Dr. Breasted of Chicago University, well-known for certain delightful volumes on ancient Egypt, the person was found to produce what may be termed a model text-book of the sort, in which the curious student can never complain of dryness of style or that impression of lack of proportion which is often made by able and excellent works that deal with kindred subjects. Indeed it is the marshaling of his materials and the reference of them to certain big lines of thought—migrations of races, nations and tribes, distribution of mankind through the centuries and over the continents—that offer one of the most attractive features of the book. The reader is not allowed to forget, because of the complicated facts presented, the larger traits of the whole, viz.: the evolution of the white races that now hold Europe, Africa, America and other parts of the globe. Particularly illuminating is his division of the old habitats of the races and nations of Western Asia into the *grasslands* of the South and the *grasslands* of the North and his reference of the old wars before the Romans to the struggle of tribes and nations to win and hold these favored lands. By such means he gives the reader a set of larger lines on which to range the multiplicity of facts that make up the history of the Oriental past.

On page 271 one reads that the Phœnician alphabet had no vowels but the chart on page 272 includes A, E and O in the list the Greeks received; is not this a mistake? Page 278 the cardinal office of Apollo as *healer-god* is overlooked and the fierce side of Athena pointing to her origin in a demon of the night symbolized by the owl is not brought out. Page 292 the allusion to the use of wigs by the Greeks in imitation of the Egyptians has a reference which fails to refer. Page 408 the gesture of the statue of Apollo with the lizard is taken to be that of a boy throwing a stone at the lizard; but it has been better explained by an arrow or tickling-straw.

The volume is a model of compact information, with plenty of attractions for the eye, to illustrate and fix in memory the facts so far as we know them. Eight color-prints and half a hundred maps, for the most part colored, and several hundred cuts in the text furnish a brave show and help to make a bright text still brighter. Dr. Breasted has not neglected hints as to religions, literatures and arts, enough to whet the curiosity of students and send them to the books that are given in the ample bibliography at the end. He has been helped in the production of this little guide to the Aryan and Semitic past by various scholars to whom he gives his thanks in the preface. (*Boston and New York: Ginn & Company, \$1.60.*)

West Point, an Intimate Picture. By Robert Charlwood Richardson, Jr., Captain, 2d Cavalry, U. S. Army. The writer was Assistant Professor of English at West Point and had occasion to renew his acquaintance with his *alma mater*, so that he does not call on reminiscences of cadet days alone to describe the famous military academy from inside and as it exists to-day. With the aid of some three dozen illustrations from photographs

one gets a reasonably good idea of the place from an outside view, but the text strives to inform us concerning the life of a cadet, cooped up as he is in one spot—albeit a wonderfully beautiful and romantic spot—through four long years, with rare opportunities allowed him to visit the world outside. If what Captain Richardson tells us concerning the feelings of a cadet during these years of internment is not exactly the same as those experienced by others, he does the best he can by giving his own—and trusting that this may apply to most of his fellows.

West Pointers have made history in a military way for the United States for one century at least and while the Academy has suffered at times from the incurable suspiciousness of a republic in its view of a school for officers of the army, it is a truism to observe that whenever the republic gets into trouble there is a sudden change—the same people who have been ready to curtail appropriations for the army in every way they could, are foremost in demanding and expecting prodigies from the forces toward which they were so grudging and intolerant. Something of this deplorable attitude is due to the necessity of holding the students far from the public eye, so that the public itself is not kept informed and easily falls into a frame of mind well-suited to the purposes of the demagogue, ever ready to flatter the Demos by telling it that severe training is not necessary, that Demos has merely to stamp the earth and a million soldiers will be ready overnight to “mix it” with the hordes of a carefully educated *soldatesca*! Just now Demos has had another eye-opener, as in 1812 and 1861.

West Point is of particular interest so far as its outside is concerned to those who care for architecture. After a great deal of difficulty it was obtained of Congress that a thoroughgoing plan for the enlargement and rebuilding of the Academy should be entrusted to one firm of architects, this to supersede the old way of adding one building of incongruous design to another.

The presence of two important buildings designed in a modern form of Gothic, the Library and the Barracks, decided the style to be followed when the Government agreed to remodel West Point some decades ago. These buildings of course were only Gothic skin deep, lacking the essential bones and structure of the great evolution in building in France during the Crusades, but perhaps no better style could have been selected and it remained for the new architects to secure to the new buildings more of the qualities possessed by the genuine article. At the same time the needs of modern life and the peculiar needs of a military training school for officers had to guide the designers. They were Messrs. Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson, while Col. John M. Carson, Jr., represented the Government in the carrying out of the plans. As one travels

north from New York by train or boat the great Riding Hall and Administration Building with the Chapel high above on the hillside, all in a granite not unlike the hills about, form a combination of structures picturesquely grouped and impressive like many of the medieval cathedrals and walled towns which survive in Europe. Sculptures and paintings are not lacking on the grounds and in the buildings of the Academy. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, \$2.00.)

Young France and New America. By Pierre de Lanux. The writer is a young Frenchman who has been spending some years in America because his health has forbidden all active work in the war. He belongs as a writer to the younger brood of French authors and has produced several books concerning the southern Slavs and interested himself in the aspirations of the writers in Slav languages toward a future unfettered by the tyranny of Russia, Austro-Hungary and Bulgaria, writers who hope for a union among the Slavs of the south in which they can fulfil their own destiny instead of being oppressed by their greater neighbors. After a brief review of literary conditions in France, with quotations from Frenchmen scarcely known by name in England and America, he gives his impressions of this country and considers the prospect of cooperation and literary interchange between France and the United States.

“More and more we are going to see morals becoming ‘a branch of æsthetics.’ [André Gide.]

“Combined with an increased consciousness in his destiny, man has developed a more powerful sense of the part he can play in it. We live in a feverish and burning period, when the world has become a furnace and all human values are fused like melting metal. And we feel that now is the right time to forge and to hammer—to forge and to coin here and now the figure and form of our alliance.” (New York: The Macmillan Company. \$1.25.)

The Verdun Medal. By S. E. Vernier, Paris, 1917. In November 1916 the town council of the ancient city of Verdun resolved to issue a medal as a souvenir of the heroic defense of the town against the German hordes and dedicate it “To the high Chiefs, Officers, Soldiers, to all the heroes known and unknown, both dead and living, who have triumphed over the barbarians’ onslaught and immortalized her name throughout the world and for ages to come.” The medal was designed by S. E. Vernier, a noted medalist of Paris, and a reproduction of it will be given in the February number of the magazine. On the obverse is a young girl’s head, helmet and sword, with the words *on ne passe pas* and on the reverse is sketched the old battle-mmented gateway to the citadel. The medal is to be had in gold or silver of the French Committee, headed by M. Stephan Lausanne, Room 1518, Hotel Vanderbilt, New York.

